

# Giant Congress Of Postal Men Starts Aug. 14

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Gay flags of 97 member nations will whip out from gleaming white staffs on Parliament Hill for six weeks beginning August 14 when the 14th Congress of the Universal Postal Union convenes in the House of Commons.

Some 350 accredited delegates from the 97 countries—greater representation than the United Nations itself — will be in the assembly. The Prime Minister and Sir Dudley Lumley, dean of the Congress, will open the proceedings at three o'clock in the Senate Chamber.

The Postmaster General and his deputy, Walter J. Turnbull, president designate of the 14th Congress, will also play leading roles, not only at the opening ceremonies but throughout the duration of the Congress.

Because of the wide diversity of languages spoken by the delegates, French is the official language of the assemblage. Equipment to provide simultaneous translation into English, Russian and Spanish will be provided.

There will be two secretariat's, a permanent one from Berne, Switzerland, which will function for the official side, and a Canadian secretariat whose duties will be to see to the comfort and well-being of the visiting delegates.

## Three Years In The Making

Plans for the Congress here have been three years in the making. The Canadian secretariat will function in the Railway Committee Room of the House of Commons.

A complete post office will be set up for the convenience of the delegates and a philatelic display is expected to attract a great deal of interest.

Growth of the postal system from mediaeval times to its present complicated and ingenious form in which world wide status has been attained is shown in histories of the Union.

One of the essential features of the Union is its universal character. In this it is distinct from most of the international organizations which have a much more limited sphere of action.

The number of member countries was originally 22. The Union, above all, performs an essentially technical task. This is one of the primary reasons for its success. Another reason lies in the humanitarian aim it pursues, that of serving the public by constantly improving its methods of service. Its various functions have been improved by difficulties encountered in

those met by other international organizations, the success of which depends upon political, economic and other factors.

It is thus that the changes occurring in the political structures of certain countries did not affect the implementation of common rules laid down for the international postal service throughout the world. The universal character of the union was not altered even by the two world wars and the disturbances that followed them.

The Congress of the Universal Postal Union constitutes the supreme authority of the Union. The assembly is not simply aimed at an exchange of views on professional matters.

It is really a conference of the plenipotentiaries of governments having as their main task the revision of the convention of the Union. The Congress, therefore has essentially legislative duties.

Although it is the only organ of the Union which takes the nature of a General Assembly of its members, it meets only once every five years, unless exceptional circumstances justify the convening of an extraordinary congress.

## Linked With Other Agencies

From the administrative point of view, the Union is linked with the members of the executive and liaison committee, taking cognizance of the five years report of the latter and approving the accounts of the union relating to the years which passed since the meeting of the preceding congress.

Till now, the Union has held 13 ordinary congresses as follows: first congress, 1874 Berne; 1878, Paris; 1885, Lisbon; 1891, Vienna; 1897, Washington; 1906, Rome; 1920, Madrid; 1924, Stockholm; 1929, London; 1934, Cairo; 1939 Buenos Aires; 1947, Paris; 1952, Brussels; and 1957 Ottawa.

An extraordinary congress meeting in Berne in July, 1900 celebrated the 25th anniversary of the foundation of the Union and decided upon the erection of a commemorative monument.

In the modern world the activity of the Postal Union must

necessarily be linked with specialized agencies and other international organizations dealing with common problems.

Provisions for reciprocal representations, exchange of information and documents as well as co-operation between the Union and the United Nations and its main and subsidiary branches were laid down in an agreement concluded in 1947 between the two organizations.

The Union is in relation with the World Health Organization; the International Labor Organization; the United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture (UNESCO) for the study of questions of common interest. These include such things as transportation by post of perishable biological material; professional diseases among postal employees; the improvement of conditions for the dissemination of books and periodicals and many other items.

## Close Ties With Aviation

Because of the ever-growing importance of Air Mail, a particularly close relationship has been started with the International Civil Aviation Organization as well as the International Air Transport Association, both of these groups being regularly represented at the Congresses and at meetings of the Executive and Liaison Committees.

The International Bureau is the permanent organ of the Universal Postal Union. Its headquarters were fixed in Berne since the foundation of the Union.

It serves as an instrument of liaison, information and con-

sultation for the postal administrations of member countries. It is not qualified to intervene in relations between the administrations and their users.

By means of a library and film library which it is constantly enriching, the Bureau places important sources of information at the disposal of the administrations, especially in those fields where technique plays an important role in postal operations. This documentation enables the countries which feel the need for it, to benefit from the experience of administrators whose services are better developed.

The Bureau may be asked to give an opinion on controversial questions involved in disputes between administrations. Often this leads to settlement. Administrations may also name the Bureau as single arbitrator to settle questions and its decision is binding on both parties.

There have been relatively few cases in which arbitrations have taken place and only 25 arbitral awards given since 1874—excellent testimony to the fine relations which exist between

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